



**Texas Children in Nature Network
Summit Workshops
December 3, 2025**

You will be asked to choose a workshop upon registration. All workshop registration changes must be given prior approval and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

When registering, please make note of the workshop selected.

As workshops fill, they will close and the workshops listed below may no longer be available on the Summit registration page.

Transportation to the workshops is on your own unless otherwise specified in the workshop description.

Public transportation is available through the [Brazos Transit District](#). We encourage carpooling when possible.

Ridesharing options in Bryan/College Station include [Uber](#) and [Lyft](#).

Please note all workshops will be held rain or shine.

1. Bike Share for Sustainable Transportation and Community Mobilization

Location: Texas A&M University Campus (exact meeting spot TBD), 1-4 p.m.

Presenters: Dr. Jay Maddock, Director-Center for Health & Nature, Professor – Texas A&M University School of Public Health

Dr. Debra Kellstedt, Assistant Professor, Texas A&M University AgriLife Extension

Maximum Number of Participants: 15

Strands: Physical & Mental Health, Nature for All

This will be an active workshop with participants riding bike share bikes through the Texas A&M campus. We will visit a series of nature spaces including the Gardens and Aggie Park. Mini lectures including bike safety, bike sharing, sustainable transportation, and bike programs like Ciclovias, will be discussed along the route.

Participants should be able to ride a bike for at least 15 minutes at a time over the course of two hours. Participants should supply their own bike helmet.

2. Exploring Nature through a Museum!

Presenters: Maria Lazo, Associate Director & Education Coordinator at Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History; Garret Leopold, Education Administrator at Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History; Dr. Deborah Cowman, Executive Director at Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History

Location: Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History (located inside the Brazos Center)

3232 Briarcrest Drive Bryan, TX, 1-4 p.m.

Maximum Number of Participants: 20

Strands: Education

Discover the challenges and benefits of exploring the natural world through a museum. The Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History has been a part of the Bryan/College Station community for over 60 years, and has the longest running camp in the community. Join us as we highlight some of the Museum's successful programming, experience our museum through a tour of our gallery, and engage in discussions to help apply these ideas to a range of informal educational settings.

Our Education Team will also showcase some of the outdoor resources we have available in our programming, particularly for our nature camps, and give you the opportunity to utilize these resources through hands-on activities often used in our own summer nature camps at the lake, nature trail, and forested area.

Inside the Museum, we will discuss how we enhance visitors' experiences through our exploration stations and scavenger hunts. We will also introduce you to some of our live animals and discuss the many benefits of using animal ambassadors to help illustrate ecological principles, and open a variety of discussions.

Finally, we will wrap up with a discussion session at our picnic area (*enjoy some coffee/tea & cookies*) while we share and learn from each other with prompt cards that pose challenges and hurdles often encountered in informal education settings.

We will be leading sessions indoors and outdoors. Please dress appropriately for both situations. We will provide a room that will be locked and away from public visitors to keep any personal belongings.

4. Green Time EDU: A New Way to Nature

Presenter: Sarah Nielsen, M.Ed., NBC-HWC, Health and Outdoor Educator, SG Wellness, LLC, Michelle Gallas, DO, FAAP, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, University of Texas at Austin Dell Medical School, Jennifer Duc, DO, FAAP, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, University of Texas at Austin Dell Medical School, Lauren Gambill, MD, MPA, FAAP, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, University of Texas at Austin Dell Medical School

Location: Gary Halter Nature Center, 13600 Rock Prairie Rd, College Station, TX 77845

Maximum Number of Participants: 35

Strands: Education

Description: Green Time EDU equips outdoor educators with a versatile theory-based framework to help children and teens build meaningful, lasting relationships with nature. Blending formal and informal curriculum approaches, it offers adaptable entry points that support the emotional, physical, and mental wellbeing of learners across age groups.

Whether you're leading forest school activities, park-based learning, or nature-integrated classroom programs, Green Time EDU is designed for scalability across elementary, middle, and high school settings. Developed in partnership with SG Wellness, LLC, Dell Children's Medical Center, and the

University of Texas Medical School in 2025, Green Time EDU curriculum includes theory-based strategies and flexible tools for implementation in a variety of outdoor learning environments.

Any logistical information for participants: This will be a hybrid indoor/outdoor workshop, materials and Green Time kits will be provided for all registrants, and will be used throughout the workshop.

5. Birdbrain Power Bird Patrols

Presenter: Sebastian Casarez

Location: Lick Creek Park

Maximum Number of Participants: 30

Strands: Nature for All, Education

Description Empower yourself with engaging and fun bird walk strategies filled with knowledgeable birding skills and bird conservation activities. In 2025, I created and developed a birding program called **"Birdbrain Power Bird Patrols "** geared towards elementary school-aged, middle school-aged, and families. This birding program teaches youth and families how to be a Bird Patrol that educates, protects, and promotes birding, protect bird habitats, protect and plant native plants, and to become active in bird conservation in small or large opportunities.

6. Designing Dynamic and Engaging Early Childhood Outdoor Environments

Presenter: National Wildlife Federation: Abi Cano Perez, Amanda Knight, and Ellen Warfield

Location: Lincoln Rec Center

Maximum Number of Participants: 30

Strands: Early Childhood

Description: Early childhood educators spend much of their time and resources ensuring that their indoor classrooms are engaging and enriching for young children. Often overlooked, outdoor spaces are also rich educational settings for children that can be designed and managed to provide a range of opportunities for nature play and learning. This session will focus on engaging participants in learning how to make improvements to their outdoor spaces to support healthy child development and well-being.

In this 3-hour interactive workshop, participants will learn about the research-backed best practice indicators for outdoor learning environments in early childhood education settings. We will share examples of how different programs have incorporated these best practices for supporting nature play and learning into their outdoor spaces. Participants will then work with ECHO's team of landscape designers and education specialists to practice designing outdoor spaces at child care facilities. In order to put these ideas into practice, participants will receive blank base maps that they will use to place different play settings throughout an outdoor learning space, making critical design choices, and discussing why they made those design choices. Participants will be encouraged (but not required) to bring printed plans, photos, and/or Google satellite images of their own outdoor spaces to

practice designing. This session will also provide a hands-on outdoor activity for participants to practice engaging young children outdoors.

7. Sunshine, Seeds, and Standards: Bringing Nature into Early Learning

Presenter: Beth Edwards, Texas Children in Nature Network, and Jodi Nerren, Texas A&M AgriLife, Randy Seagraves and Caren Walton, Texas Master Gardeners

Location: AgriLife Event Center - 556 John Kimbrough Boulevard, College Station, TX 77843

Maximum Number of Participants: 50

Strands: Early Childhood

Description: Join us for an inspiring, hands-on workshop designed for early childhood educators and professionals seeking to enrich their programs through nature-based learning. Participants will explore engaging, developmentally appropriate strategies that connect children with nature while aligning with the Texas Early Learning Guidelines and OLE! 12 best practices for outdoor spaces. This session also features an introduction to the Learn, Eat, Grow & Go early childhood curriculum from the Junior Master Gardener Program, which blends gardening, nutrition education and physical activity into meaningful learning experiences. Discover how to integrate all of these powerful tools into your daily practice to support whole child-development while cultivating lifelong healthy habits and a love for the natural world!

8. Rooted in Story: Creating Nature-Focused StoryWalks from Concept to Completion

Presenter: Cheryl Potemkin, Learning Manager: Early Childhood Programs at Fort Worth Botanic Garden, Laura Tadena: Austin Public Library

Location: Tha Gardens: 556 John Kimbrough Boulevard, College Station, TX 77843

Maximum Number of Participants: 25

Strands: Access

Description Take a deep dive into the art and impact of StoryWalks with this hands-on workshop designed for educators, librarians, community organizers, and nature advocates. Presented by a team of seasoned StoryWalk creators, this session will guide you through the steps of developing your own StoryWalk: from site selection and story choice to funding strategies, signage production, and community engagement. Explore a StoryWalk installation to spark inspiration and connect for collaborative learning, practical tips, and dedicated planning time to begin shaping your own StoryWalk vision. Whether you're just starting out or looking to refine your process, you'll leave with a toolkit of ideas, resources, and next steps to bring your story to life in the landscape.

Participants, if you have a book in mind that you'd like to use for your StoryWalk, please bring 3 copies of the same book.

9. Texas Inspired Curriculum: a look at Project WILD, Project Learning Tree, and Project WET

Presenter: Sara Jose, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Jaden Kelly, Texas A&M Forest Service, Stephanie Regets, Guadalupe Blanco River Authority

Location: Presidential Library

Maximum Number of Participants: 60

Strands: Education, ECE

Description: Get ready to spark curiosity and connect your students to natural phenomena! This lively session introduces the dynamic trio of environmental education—Project WILD, Project Learning Tree, and Project WET. Discover how these award-winning programs use wildlife, forests, and water to bring science to life from pre-K through high school. You'll explore hands-on, TEKS-aligned activities and walk away inspired, with a clear path to future trainings that unlock full access to these powerful teaching tools.

10. Nature Connections for Children of All Abilities

Presenter: Rene Bartos, MD, MPH, FAAP, Developmental Behavioral Pediatrician and co-chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Community Pediatrics Nature and Child Health SIG Anna Raumaker, PEEQ Project Specialist, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, facilitator for Project Wild and Project Learning Tree and Master Naturalist; Jessica Burke, CTRS, CPRP, ADAC Accessibility Manager, ADA Act Coordinator, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Virginia Rose, Birdability Founder

Location: Lick Creek Park

Maximum Number of Participants: 20

Strands: Nature for All

Description Nature connection benefits all children, yet children with special needs and differing abilities often face challenges in accessing and exploring nature. In this 3-hour interactive workshop, we will describe the benefits of nature for all children. We will identify common challenges that children with special needs and differences may encounter in exploring nature, such as access, safety, and engagement due to physical, behavioral, and neurodevelopmental differences, including sensory sensitivities. We will present simple strategies to increase nature connection opportunities for children through planning for nature experiences based on individual strengths and needs, provide tools to promote engagement, and methods for adapting nature-based activities. Participants will observe demonstrations, engage in hands-on experiences incorporating best practices utilized in nature-based programs, explore community resources, and share ideas through group discussion.

Finally, workshop participants will create an action plan of steps to support nature-based experiences for children in their programming.

11. Guided Forest Therapy Walk: Engage your senses, quiet your mind, and immerse yourself in nature

Presenter: Ellen Barnett Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Education, Trinity University

Location: Lick Creek Park

Maximum Number of Participants: 20

Strands: Health, Access

Our bodies share the same elements as the beings we meet in natural settings. Humans are nature, but we have allowed ourselves to become separated. During this guided forest therapy walk, you will experience the effects of *shinrin-yoku*—the Japanese practice of bathing your senses in the surrounding forest. The trained certified forest therapy guides will help you slow down by using a standard sequence of invitations that deliberately move you out of your head and engage your senses as you reconnect with the world around you. They will provide multiple ways for you to experience walks so everyone can participate in a way that meets their needs.

These walks are not strenuous and use gentle invitations to increase awareness, deepen connections, and elevate well-being. Honoring the spirit of *shinrin-yoku*, this experience will close with a tea ceremony featuring tea made from plants native to the forest. Participants will benefit firsthand how forest bathing can impact individual well-being which in turn benefits their educational interactions with children, experience invitations that can be transferred to their own contexts and examine research linking nature experiences to improved wellbeing. Please bring a water bottle and something to sit on.

12. The Psychology and Neuroscience Behind Nature & Mental Health

Presenter: Chi-Wei Chang

Location: Lick Creek Park

Maximum Number of Participants: 30

Strands: Health

We know that nature is good for us, but how familiar are you with the details of how and why? Take a deep dive into the psychology and neuroscience behind why our mental health is so intricately tied to nature, learn more recent research on what our nervous system has evolved to tune into outdoors and what happens in the brain, and take away practical tools for everyday mental wellness.

Additionally for a more holistic understanding of what is happening with our nervous systems, we'll take a look at the common challenges in modern-day mental health that therapists are treating and that psychology research is increasingly focused on, including some of the subconscious factors tied back to nature connection and what's missing that can influence emotional regulation as well as our sense of happiness and belonging.